

# COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **Davis and Waxman Introduce 'Ryan Haight Act' To Fight Growing Problem of Illegal Sales of Prescription Drugs Over Internet**

*California Teenager Ryan Haight Died in 2001 When He Overdosed  
On Pills Purchased on Internet Without Valid Prescription*

WASHINGTON, D.C. - House Government Reform Committee Chairman Tom Davis (R-VA) and Ranking Minority Member Henry A. Waxman (D-CA) today introduced the "Ryan Haight Internet Pharmacy Consumer Protection Act of 2005," a bill to thwart the growing and dangerous sale of prescription drugs over the Internet without a valid prescription.

The Davis-Waxman legislation, H.R. 840, amends the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to address this problem in several steps. First, it requires Internet pharmacy websites to clearly identify the business, physician, and pharmacist associated with the website and the states where the person is authorized by law to prescribe or dispense prescription drugs.

Second, the bill prohibits a website from referring a customer to a doctor who then writes a prescription without ever seeing the patient.

Third, the bill provides states with new enforcement authority modeled on the Federal Telemarketing Sales Act that will allow a state attorney general to shut down rogue sites across the country, rather than only in his or her state.

Ryan Haight, 18, died on February 12, 2001, after overdosing on Vicodin, which he had purchased from an Internet pharmacy without a prescription. This was far from an isolated incident. Americans of all ages have discovered that with a few clicks of the mouse they can obtain powerful drugs like Vicodin, Codeine, Valium and OxyContin from rogue Internet pharmacies without ever having a medical exam or speaking with a physician.

“As we saw with the tragic case of Ryan Haight, the illegal sale of prescription drugs over the Internet can have deadly consequences. This problem is becoming an increasingly serious one, one that requires federal action to enhance federal and state enforcement capabilities. While I do believe the federal government should generally play a minimal role in regulating on-line commerce, this legislation is necessary because too many Americans, especially teenagers, are finding ways to gain access to potentially deadly prescription drugs without valid prescriptions,” Chairman Davis said.

“These rogue websites occupy a dark corner of our healthcare system,” said Rep. Waxman. “This bipartisan legislation will prevent the sale of potentially dangerous medications without a valid prescription.”

In support of H.R. 840, John P. Walters, Director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, stated: “Over the past three years, youth drug use has dropped 17 percent, but an area of growing concern is the diversion of prescription drugs over the Internet. The unregulated sale of dangerous prescription drugs puts our children in harm's way. Recognizing this problem, leaders in Congress drafted the Internet Pharmacy Consumer Protection Act, which is an important step in protecting the integrity of our medical system and in keeping families safe.”

The legislation also has the endorsement of the Federation of State Medical Boards, the National Community Pharmacists Association, the California Medical Association, the National Consumers League and Attorneys General from across the country.

This is the second consecutive Congress Davis and Waxman have introduced legislation to regulate sales of prescription drugs over the Internet. Last year, the pair introduced H.R. 3880, the Internet Pharmacy Consumer Protection Act. The Committee on Government Reform also held two hearings, on March 27, 2003 and March 18, 2004, to highlight the dangers posed by the illegal sales of prescription drugs over the Internet.

The Ryan Haight Act differs from the previous Internet Pharmacy Consumer Protection Act in a few ways. The new legislation clarifies that the Internet disclosure requirements do not apply to brick-and-mortar pharmacies that dispense drugs directly to patients. It also ensures that the legislation will not interfere with large telemedicine programs run by hospitals and group practices that have their own pharmacies.

An identical version of the Davis-Waxman bill will be introduced in the Senate by Sens. Norm Coleman (R-MN) and Dianne Feinstein (D-CA).

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